Special Trains for Congress (I) Rally

3208. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to statee:

(a) what is the number of special trains and the total number of coaches so employed for carrying persons to the Congress (I) rally in Delhi on the 31st October, 1988;

(b) the number of persons so carried, journey charges in total, payments made and the remaining dues;

(c) the names of parties, their addresses towards which such dues remain unpaid along with such amounts;

(d) what is Governments policy regarding advance/after payments when coaches/trains are so booked;

(e) how many days in advance, such requests are entertained, and in the case of this rally when the last request was received; and

(f) the detention charges in the case of each of the above trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAV RAO SCINDIA): (a) to (f) The information is being collected from the Railways and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Changing train timings without prior notice

3209. SHRI RAM AWADHESH SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that timings of several trains, including Amritsar-Hatia/Tata-Chandigarh trains were changed on 3rd November, 1988 without prior notice in Press/Radio/TV; if so, what were the reasons therefor;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Times of India dated the 2nd November, 1988 to the effect that the train timings would not be changed; and

(c) if so, whether Government would suitably compensate all the passengers put to inconvenience and financial loss?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAV RAO SCINDIA):

(a) and (b) On account of damage to tracks caused by floods in Ferozpur Division schedule of number of trains had to be marginally adjusted and this information was published in news-papers including 'Times of India'.

(c) Does not arise.

Amendment to the Haj Act

3210. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration amend the Haj Act;

(b) if so, what is the nature of amendments likely to be made;

(c) whether some State Governments have raised objections to the proposed amendments; and

(d) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) Yes Sir. There is a proposal to amend the Haj Committee Act, 1959.

(b) The new legislation aims at making the Central Haj Committee

more broadbased giving adequate representation to States having sizeable Muslim population.

(c) No Sir. However, some State Governments/State Haj Committees have offered their comments on various clauses of the draft bill which will be duly considered.

(d) Does not arise.

Report of Amnesty International on India

3211. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has charges the Amnety International of presenting happenings in the country in a one-sided and very distorted matter?

(b) if so, whether the Amnesty International report tended to highlight stray incidents of human rights;

(c) if so, what specific charges of human rights violations were made and to what extent India had investigated them and how many of them have been found baseless; and

(d) what steps are being taken to change the deport in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The report of Amnesty International published in August 1988 alleges curtailment of legal safeguards through the National Security Act, The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, The Terrorist & Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, The Terrorist Affected Areas (Special Courts) Act and the 59th Amendment to the Constitution. While on the one hand the Amnesty International has recongnised the existence of an extraordinary situation in Punjab and some other parts of India, leading to the pormulgation of the above-mentioned special Acts and the 59th Amendment to the Constitution sum and substance of its recommendations would/mean reverting to ordinary laws.

Most of the specific cases of alleged human rights violations mentioned in the Report are also found to be baseless. For example, the allegation that Shri Surjit Singh Barnala, former Chief Minister of Punjab was detained under the National Security Act around 14.5.86 is totally false as he was neither arrested nor detained under NSA. Another allegation is that NSA has been used to detain political and religious leaders for curbing legitimate political activity. Government does not believe that giving moral support to the terrorists, who were indulging in murders and other violent activity with the stated objective of secession of a part of India's territory through statements at public fora, can be treated as legitimate political activity. Amnesty International also seems unaware of the fact that the trial of Sikh detainees at Jodhpur has been delayed by the dilatory tacticts adopted by the accused themselves. As far as other alleged violations of human rights viz. tourture, death in police custody etc. are concerned, laws in India do not permit torture by any individual, including the police.

Amnesty International has also misunderstood the legal position in so far as its Report alleges that the 59th Amendment to the Constitution permits direct rule from New Delhi for upto 3 year without having to obtain parliamentary approval. The correct position is that Government will have to seek approval of Parliament every six months.

(d) The point of view of the Government has been made known suitably from time to time.